

Primordial 401

Chapter 401 Qin Kaifeng

After arriving at the four academies, a martial artist with Eighth Layer of the Heaven-reaching Realm cultivation took a liking to the private room of a man holding a white feather fan and consequently issued a challenge to him.

However, the outcome of the fight stunned everyone.

When the challenger charged towards the man with the feather fan, who was gentle and refined, he was nonchalantly sent flying with a slap.

The challenger spat out fresh blood on the spot, losing several teeth, and was completely dumbfounded.

He could never have imagined that he would be so thoroughly defeated.

The spectators were also incredulous, for they had clearly seen how this martial artist, at the Eighth Layer of the Heaven-reaching Realm, had once challenged a martial artist at the Ninth Layer of the Heaven-reaching Realm and had nearly crushed them in victory.

And yet, when challenging this gentle and refined man, he ended up in such a sorry state.

Besides these two, who were untouchable entities within the academies, the third name was Lin Chen.

The fourth, however, was a petite girl with a mushroom haircut, the same girl with the Supreme God Body that Lin Chen had noticed.

Among these four, apart from the princess of Yanwu Country with her astonishing background, the other two also had backgrounds that were not at all inferior.

The man's ancestors were originally elders of the Formation Sect; this person's name was Qin Kaifeng. In fact, with his grandfather's status, a single word from him would have easily allowed him entry into the Formation Sect.

Nevertheless, Qin Kaifeng was extremely proud and did not want to rely on his ancestors' strength. As a result, he wandered outside from a young age, though still under the cultivation resources provided by his ancestors.

So it was actually quite laughable. If he really had the integrity, why continuously utilize the cultivation resources of his ancestors.

He simply wanted to prove that his talent was exceptionally strong, and knowing this, his ancestor had no choice but to let him go to the Formation Sect's meet to gain some insight.

Qin Kaifeng was not only of a peculiar temperament, but his personality was equally unpredictable; he was sometimes gentle and refined, and suddenly explosive in his anger, with a readiness to physically harm others. The man who had been slapped away, losing his teeth, was a testament to this.

Qin Kaifeng was an excessively belligerent fellow, who would occasionally indulge in chess for amusement. However, most of the time, he was obsessed with practicing martial arts and sought out challenges everywhere.

Initially, everyone thought that given Qin Kaifeng's temperament, once he learned of Lin Chen's existence, he would cause trouble for Lin Chen. Many who had been plundered by Lin Chen or who had been taught a lesson by Qin Kaifeng hoped that the two would come to blows, fighting a life-or-death battle.

No matter the outcome, who lost or won, it would satisfy the crowd since they lacked the strength to teach the duo lessons themselves.

"Great, Qin Kaifeng has finally learned of Lin Chen's presence. Is he going to cause trouble for Lin Chen?"

"Judging by the direction he's heading, it seems so. Now we're in for a good show."

"These two lunatics, one who swindles without paying the consequences, pillaging treasures, and the other who is as combative as life itself, capricious in nature—if they encounter each other, it's likely that one of them will not make it out alive."

"Qin Kaifeng's ancestor is from the Formation Sect; if Lin Chen angers him and happens to injure Qin Kaifeng, his end probably won't be pretty. The Formation Sect won't let him off easily."

"The two have not yet fought, and the outcome is still unknown. Perhaps Lin Chen might not even withstand Qin Kaifeng's attacks and could possibly die by his hands."

"A battle between these two is bound to be fierce. I'm so looking forward to it, and the outcome is equally anticipated."

Within the four academies, countless martial artists heard the news that Qin Kaifeng was going to fight Lin Chen and they flocked to the scene to watch.

However, when everyone gathered around Lin Chen's outside room, the result was astonishing.

Although Qin Kaifeng and Lin Chen did indeed fight a major battle, the outcome turned out to be a draw. Afterwards, they agreed to battle another day and then celebrated with drinks, actually playing chess in the courtyard together.

This action left the surrounding crowd baffled; the scenario they had expected did not happen at all.

They couldn't fathom how someone with Qin Kaifeng's temperament could become friends with Lin Chen.

What they did not know was that through their combat, both Qin Kaifeng and Lin Chen enhanced their strength, as they had both seen something in each other that could aid their own cultivation—that battling one another could enhance their cultivation.

Hence, in the following days, the two engaged in several more fights.

After battling Qin Kaifeng, Lin Chen concluded that Qin Kaifeng's strength was even greater than that of Du Feiyu, who possessed the Supreme God Body.

Lin Chen's cultivation had also increased quite a bit recently, but in his fights with Qin Kaifeng, he never fell into a disadvantageous position, whereas Du Feiyu had been injured by Lin Chen.

However, it had been more than ten days since Lin Chen last sparred with Du Feiyu. Given Du Feiyu's talent, his cultivation might have advanced during this time, but it seemed unlikely that he could have caught up with Qin Kaifeng so quickly.

In the remaining days, as the time for the Formation Sect's competition approached, the number of spectators watching Lin Chen and Qin Kaifeng's battles decreased.

However, Lin Chen still did not want their fights to be watched by others, as the purpose of sparring with Qin Kaifeng was to enhance cultivation, and inadvertently, some trump cards might be revealed.

Even though the surrounding spectators stealing a look at the moves didn't affect Lin Chen, as he simply did not regard them as a concern, even if they met at the grand competition, Lin Chen would not be afraid.

What Lin Chen was worried about, however, was that these individuals would convey what they saw to a few powerful presences that Lin Chen could sense. If so, it could make him cautious in the upcoming competition.

Qin Kaifeng seemed to care about this as well, so he simply took Lin Chen to another place to spar, outside of Baiming Garden.

"Is this the Martial Arts Practice Ground of the Formation Sect Outer Sect?"

Arriving at the place led by Qin Kaifeng, Lin Chen felt a bit surprised because, according to the rules, before joining the Formation Sect, non-disciples were not allowed to enter the Practice Ground, even the Outer Sect one.

Chapter 402 Recruitment Conference Begins

"Brother Lin, this is the Outer Sect Martial Arts Practice Ground of the Formation Sect. Let's spar here. It's quiet and no one else will disturb us."

Qin Kaifeng led Lin Chen directly towards the front.

On the Martial Arts Practice Ground, the overseeing elder, upon seeing the arrival of Qin Kaifeng, not only did not stop them but even greeted them with a warm smile.

Lin Chen nodded. Since Qin Kaifeng had found such a location, naturally, today Lin Chen was eager to have a good bout of sparring with him.

The grand competition of the Formation Sect was just around the corner, and Lin Chen saw this as a final opportunity to make a push. If he could thoroughly solidify his foundations, he would be able to make an assault on the Ninth Layer of the Heaven-reaching Realm.

Although it was only an advancement of one realm, the difference between the Ninth Layer and Eighth Layer of the Melding Earth Realm was a watershed. Once he broke through, Lin Chen's strength would surely achieve a substantial increase.

Qin Kaifeng was very strong, and in their sparring, Lin Chen still couldn't gain the slightest advantage.

"Brother Lin, don't be polite with me. Don't hold back. It's only interesting for me if you take it seriously," Qin Kaifeng said.

His gaze settled on Lin Chen, his eyes brimming with endless fighting spirit.

Qin Kaifeng possessed formidable talent. After every battle with Lin Chen, he would have many insights and after going into seclusion, his cultivation would inevitably improve.

Therefore, Qin Kaifeng was exceedingly eager for spars with Lin Chen. What astonished him most was that even though Lin Chen's cultivation was lower, his combat strength was astounding, allowing him to fight on equal footing with Qin.

"Then, Brother Qin, you should be careful," said Lin Chen with a calm voice. A flash of Spiritual Light appeared in his hand, and suddenly he was holding a Flowing Light Sword.

In fact, Lin Chen's thoughts were quite similar to Qin Kaifeng's. Benefiting greatly from battling with Qin, Lin Chen had much to gain as well.

Qin Kaifeng's talent and strength far surpassed Du Feiyu's.

For Lin Chen to defeat Qin Kaifeng was a formidable challenge.

If he did not employ Formation tactics, defeating Qin Kaifeng would even be impossible.

But if he resorted to Formation tactics, that would betray the initial intention and purpose of Lin Chen's sparring with Qin Kaifeng.

At this moment, the two were engaged in battle. Lin Chen's Flowing Light Sword continued to wave, unleashing countless streaks of Sword Light slashing towards Qin Kaifeng.

Qin Kaifeng, however, faced all of Lin Chen's attacks head-on with the strength of his physical body.

Qin Kaifeng's strength left Lin Chen in awe. At present, he had already executed the eleventh style of the High Mountain Flowing Water Swordsmanship, and still, he was no match for Qin. This indicated how formidable Qin Kaifeng's strength was.

Possibly, only by executing the complete High Mountain Flowing Water Swordsmanship, including the Thirteenth Style, might Lin Chen have the chance to gain the upper hand.

However, Lin Chen had not yet mastered all thirteen strokes of the swordsmanship, so it seemed he could not gain the upper hand with swordplay alone.

But for Qin Kaifeng to pose a threat to Lin Chen was not an easy task either.

After all, Lin Chen still had the Purple Cloud Wings Movement Martial Technique, but dodging alone was not a solution; after all, throughout the battle, Qin was facing Lin Chen head-on.

So in that sense, Lin Chen had already lost the fight.

As the battle continued, Lin Chen began to fall into a disadvantage, increasingly suppressed by Qin Kaifeng.

Lin Chen wanted several times to directly employ Formation tactics and use Talisman Inscriptions, but those trump cards were meant to be used in real combat. Currently, Lin Chen was merely using the sparring session to refine himself and it was entirely unnecessary to employ both Formations and Talismans.

Thus, from this battle, Lin Chen realized one thing.

That was, in the past, he had been too reliant on Formations and Talismans, even drawing upon the Power of the Dragon Vein beneath Divine Sun City at one time.

But what if Lin Chen didn't have these tools? What advantage would he have then?

Although Formations and Talismans were also techniques that Lin Chen excelled at, those powers, after all, were external. Lin Chen could consider them his own strength, but he could not depend on them.

After all, in front of truly powerful foes, Talismans could be exhausted, and Formations could be broken.

"Brother Qin is indeed a favored son of heaven, with a strength that I cannot match," Lin Chen admitted, gasping for air. For the first time in a while, he had been pushed to such an extent, with his Spiritual Power almost depleted, reaching an unprecedented state of exhaustion.

Looking at Qin Kaifeng, Lin Chen couldn't help but admire him from the bottom of his heart—in terms of both strength and talent, Qin was indeed very impressive.

Eventually, Lin Chen and Qin Kaifeng returned to their respective dwellings, seizing the few remaining days before the commencement of the Formation Sect's grand competition to enter seclusion, striving to break through their own bottlenecks. That way, Lin Chen would have more odds of advancing to the higher ranks in the competition of the Formation Sect.

Time flew by swiftly, and nine days had passed.

Today, the Formation Sect was finally hosting this year's grand competition.

All the martial artists entered into the Formation Sect were flying en masse toward the Sky Square of the Formation Sect.

Utilizing many Formation tactics, the Formation Sect had astonishingly constructed an enormous aerial battlefield using the various mountains and peaks as foundations.

The number of martial artists who came to participate in the competition this year was as many as over seven hundred thousand.

Looking down at the dense crowd below, the elders of the Formation Sect arrived first at the aerial battlefield.

"Everyone, silence please. I'm sure you have all heard of the recruitment rules of our Formation Sect," announced an elder suddenly. With those words, several elderly men with wisps of white hair appeared above the aerial battlefield, slowly making their presence known. These were three martial artists with long beards, dressed in white robes.

Upon seeing the trio, the martial artists participating in the Formation Sect's competition immediately fell silent and looked up towards the sky.

Everyone knew that these three elders were exceptional powerhouses within the Formation Sect.

Lin Chen also raised his head to look at the three, sensing their aura, his heart stirred with excitement.

"These three, they are all at the Peak of the Reverting Void Realm!"

Chapter 403 The Terrifying Elimination Rate

"The guy in the middle, though he also has the cultivation of the Peak Reverting Void Realm, has a stronger aura than the two beside him. He's probably already half a step into the Heavenly Human Realm," Lin Chen silently mused, looking up at the three figures in the sky above the battlefield.

Around him, other martial artists were also watching the trio above with great interest, their comments never ceasing, but all were spoken in hushed tones—after all, nobody knew the temperaments of these old fellows from the Formation Sect, and to anger them would be unwise.

"Ladies and gentlemen, please be quiet."

Above the battlefield in the sky, of the three elders, the one in the lead barely moved his lips, yet a voice as melodious as the sound of nature reached the ears of every martial artist below.

Upon hearing this, all the martial artists below immediately fell silent.

"All participants, pass through this barrier, and it will automatically detect your talent and cultivation. Those who cannot pass through may return the way they came, while those who do will be able to continue to the next test," the leading elder with white hair spoke indifferently, his voice once again reaching everyone's ears.

Although many among the crowd were attending the Formation Sect's recruitment assembly for the first time, they had heard about this test before.

At that moment, beneath the sky battlefield, numerous stairs made out of stones seemed to be built out of thin air, forming a Heavenly Ladder that the crowd could use to reach the battlefield above.

Yet in the middle of the way to the sky battlefield via the Heavenly Ladder, there was a transparent screen. It was said that this screen could automatically exclude those with poor talents and insufficient cultivation, preventing them from being recognized by this grand meeting.

Upon hearing this, some martial artists immediately started climbing the Heavenly Ladder.

Generally, martial artists who had reached the Heaven-reaching Realm, as long as they were not too old, could pass through that transparent screen.

Those who couldn't pass were mostly older martial artists whose cultivation had yet to surpass the Heaven-reaching Realm.

There were more than seven hundred thousand martial artists who had come to the Formation Sect, and incredibly, more than half of them failed to pass through the screen.

No matter how hard they tried, using every kind of method to break a hole through the screen, it proved to be fruitless.

Just as Lin Chen was about to make his move to tackle the screen, a figure flew to his side. Lin Chen turned his head and found it was Qin Kaifeng.

Qin Kaifeng approached Lin Chen and started to brief him.

The lead elder in the middle was named Tang Yunguang, the Great Elder of the Formation Sect Outer disciples, overseeing all matters of the Outer Sect.

The other two elders beside him were the Second and Third Elders of the Outer Sect.

To Lin Chen's surprise, these three individuals were actually brothers.

Although Tang Yunguang and his brothers didn't have great talent, they had an exceptional understanding between them that ordinary people did not possess. They cultivated a joint attack method that allowed them to compensate for each other's shortcomings. So even though their talent was lacking, they managed to cultivate to their current realm.

It was not apparent that all three had only reached Peak Reverting Void Realm cultivation, but when united, even an early-stage Heavenly Human Realm warrior could not gain an advantage over them.

There was a big difference between the Outer and Inner Sects of the Formation Sect.

Typically, the Outer Sect was looked down upon by the Inner Sect, for whether it be the cultivation methods or the cultivation resources, the Outer Sect Disciples were not on the same level as the Inner Sect Disciples.

But for someone at Tang Yunguang's level, this was no longer the case. Their status within the Formation Sect even surpassed some ordinary elders of the Inner Sect, not to mention the True Disciples.

Among the major powers of the Formation Sect Outer Sect, besides the Zhao Family and the Chu Family, there was also the presence of the Tang Family.

Hearing Qin Kaifeng's introduction, Lin Chen gained a better understanding of the Formation Sect's power dynamics.

However, Lin Chen always had one question in his mind: how did Qin Kaifeng, who was not from the Formation Sect, know so much about it?

Lin Chen's curiosity about Qin Kaifeng's ancestors grew. During his time in the Formation Sect, he occasionally overheard some disciples privately discussing Qin Kaifeng's identity.

Though Lin Chen was not one to meddle in others' affairs, he did hear it but didn't delve any deeper.

But now, hearing Qin Kaifeng voluntarily share these matters, Lin Chen's curiosity was piqued.

According to the situation, it was clear Qin Kaifeng had a very powerful force behind him.

Fortunately, according to what Qin Kaifeng said, the Zhao Family and the Chu Family's influence within the Formation Sect's Outer Sect had always been at odds.

Thus, with the Zhao Family bearing a grudge against Lin Chen, the Chu Family helped Lin Chen in return. Furthermore, since Lin Chen was looked after by Wu Qingxia, the Chu Family naturally wanted to curry favor with him all the more.

The strength of the Tang Family's power, according to what Qin Kaifeng claimed, was not inferior to the other two families.

"Brother Qin, I heard those guys say your ancestor is from the Formation Sect, will you tell me about it?"

Unable to restrain his curiosity, Lin Chen asked bluntly.

However, upon hearing this, Qin Kaifeng's face clouded over with a dark expression, showing his reluctance to speak on the matter.

"It's nothing. They're all issues from the older generation. They're better left untouched," Qin Kaifeng declined to elaborate on his family background, and naturally, Lin Chen did not pursue the topic any further.

Time flew by, and out of the original gathering of over seven hundred thousand martial artists, only nearly three hundred thousand managed to pass through the transparent screen. This elimination rate of over fifty percent was genuinely astonishing.

The Formation Sect indeed had a great reputation, attracting martial artists with much higher talent than Jade Cauldron Sect disciples. However, upon reaching the Formation Sect, they all found themselves eliminated.

But it made sense, after all, the Formation Sect, being one of the Eastern Domain's five great first-rate sects, naturally wouldn't settle for ordinary martial artists. Recruiting those with mediocre abilities would only be a waste of the sect's precious cultivation resources.

With the Formation Sect's strength, there was no need to pad their numbers with sheer volume.

"Brother Lin, your cultivation is only at the Melding Earth Realm, but you shouldn't be rejected by this screen. I will take my leave first; I hope to see you at the final contest of the assembly," Qin Kaifeng said to Lin Chen, smiling faintly, before striding up the Heavenly Ladder.

Hearing Qin Kaifeng's words, Lin Chen couldn't help but shake his head silently. Qin Kaifeng's remark was clearly mocking him—Lin Chen definitely did not want to be stopped by the screen and become a laughingstock.

Chapter 404 Do you really not know who he is?

"Let me see what secrets this light screen holds."

As soon as Lin Chen finished speaking, he flew up and headed towards the Heavenly Ladder.

In Lin Chen's opinion, the transparent light screen above the sky was extremely ingenious, certainly of a level above Fourth Grade Formation.

Watching the martial artists assault the light screen above the sky for their future prospects, Lin Chen did not offer any reminders.

In fact, Lin Chen had already noticed that the Formation spread out under the sky battlefield was vast, so if about a hundred or so martial artists joined forces and concentrated their power on one point, they would surely be able to break through the Formation.

The people from the Formation Sect had only said that passing through the light screen would count as having passed the first trial of assessment, but they had not specified the means one should use.

Hence, as long as everyone could make it through, even Tang Yunguang would not have a reason to fault them.

Lin Chen thought to himself that if he couldn't pass through the light screen above the Heavenly Ladder later, he would use his swordsmanship to focus on one point and shatter the Formation, and he would surely break through.

Once Lin Chen set this precedent, the others would surely follow suit.

However, this was just Lin Chen's fallback option. If he could make his way through by leaping, he naturally wouldn't do so.

Whoosh—

Lin Chen's body collided with the light screen, and everyone saw a gentle flash of light sweep across him. Lin Chen only felt a force penetrate into his body.

However, as soon as that force entered his body, the Primordial Transformation Art began to operate immediately, instantly absorbing the power that had seeped inside.

Immediately after, Lin Chen's body passed through the transparent light screen.

"So that's it; apart from targeting Talent and Cultivation Realm, this Formation is also related to physique."

Lin Chen said lightly with a faint smile, talking to himself.

Lin Chen possesses an Ancient Divine Body, countless times stronger than a Supreme God Body, so the Formation immediately allowed him past upon sensing his physique.

"That kid is quite a promising seedling."

Just as Lin Chen's body had passed through the light screen above the sky, Tang Yunguang's gaze immediately fell upon him.

Tang Yunguang had personally participated in the arrangement of the Formation restricting the passage of others, so he could sense the feedback from the Formation, and Lin Chen's speed in passing through

the light screen was just too fast; the Formation offered virtually no resistance to him, which is why Tang Yunguang took immediate notice of him.

"This lad is the one the Chu Family boy spoke of, the one Elder Wu asked to look after."

Tang Yunshan approached Tang Yuntian and spoke up, slightly squinting his eyes.

Upon hearing this, Tang Yuntian's gaze brightened. Wu Qingxia carried significant weight within the Formation Sect, and even the Sect Master didn't put on airs with her.

Having gained Wu Qingxia's favor, Lin Chen could have entered the Formation Sect directly, but Wu Qingxia wanted him to participate in the recruitment assembly, seemingly keen to gauge Lin Chen's potential.

Therefore, Tang Yuntian and Tang Yunshan both began to take great interest in Lin Chen.

"What's going on here? We, at the Heaven-reaching Realm, can't pass through this light screen, so how can that kid with merely Melding Earth Realm Cultivation make it through?"

"Exactly, that kid is indeed at the Melding Earth Realm. If our Talent isn't to the Formation Sect's liking, wouldn't that kid be directly eliminated? Is there some kind of inside story here? So much for fairness and impartiality, but in the end, it's all about who has connections. The great Formation Sect is nothing more."

"It has to be that way; there's definitely an inside story."

As the martial artists below the light screen who had not passed through engaged in a buzz of discussion and fixed their gaze on Lin Chen, they began to speak up.

The martial artists speaking these words were those who did not recognize Lin Chen or might have heard of his name but had not seen him in person. Otherwise, had they known Lin Chen's identity, they would not have spoken such words.

"Have you all gone mad, to openly question that scourge?"

At the height of the ruckus, the messily dressed man who had had some transactions with Lin Chen stepped forward and addressed the crowd.

The crowd listened, puzzled, and the messily dressed man quickly explained Lin Chen's identity to everyone.

"What did you say? This guy is Lin Chen, the one who plundered countless Treasures from those living in the Four Institutes?"

"Impossible, wasn't it said that Lin Chen has strength nearing the Reverting Void Realm? How can his Cultivation be merely at the Melding Earth Realm?"

Upon hearing the words of the messily dressed man, the faces of those around were filled with disbelief, but the reactions of some martial artists nearby confirmed that the man had indeed not lied.

Once aware of Lin Chen's identity, people felt speechless and found it fitting that such an abnormally strong individual passed through the transparent light screen.

After all, Lin Chen should not be viewed with the ordinary standards.

"Brother Lin truly did not let me down."

Upon seeing Lin Chen's arrival, Qin Kaifeng immediately approached him and laughed.

"Brother Qin jests. If I hadn't passed through this light screen, how could I have a chance to face you in the final competition?"

Lin Chen shook his head and smiled.

"You're too modest, Brother Lin. Actually, even if you hadn't passed through this light screen, there would have been other opportunities to enter the subsequent tests."

Looking at the martial artists below the light screen, Qin Kaifeng said.

"Does Brother Qin refer to joining the War Department of the Formation Sect?"

Lin Chen understood Qin Kaifeng's meaning and spoke lightly.

Qin Kaifeng's mention of the War Department was something Lin Chen had heard Chu Zisa mention before.

"Brother Lin really is acquainted with the folks from the War Department. I wonder if you could introduce me to them."

Upon hearing Lin Chen's words, Qin Kaifeng's eyes immediately lit up.

The question surprised Lin Chen somewhat. With Qin Kaifeng's connections in the Formation Sect, could he really not even meet someone from the War Department?

Chapter 405 Natural Talent Test

"With Brother Qin's background in the Formation Sect, isn't joining the War Department easy?"

Lin Chen had not considered that Qin Kaifeng would be interested in the War Department.

The War Department was generally a place pursued by groups who loved martial combat and sought to improve their cultivation through battle, and also had a strong belief in the Formation Sect, which is why they chose to join the War Department.

For Qin Kaifeng, the War Department was indeed a good place to go.

However, Lin Chen was curious about how, given Qin Kaifeng's background, he could be unable to enter the War Department, as he should have had access to all areas within the Formation Sect.

After hearing Lin Chen's words, Qin Kaifeng shook his head helplessly, revealing a resigned smile.

"Brother Lin may not know, my ancestors may have a fairly strong position within the Formation Sect and can offer me many conveniences, but the War Department is no ordinary place. It's the foundational force of the Formation Sect. They extremely dislike people like me, a profligate son; how could they possibly let me join?"

"Aside from the reason of my identity, the forces that the War Department wants to recruit are actually those with weaker talent, so as to avoid martial artists from shining too brightly after joining and slipping out of their control."

"Otherwise, why would those with poor talent and who failed the First Layer trial have the chance to join the Formation Sect and be taken in by the War Department?"

Qin Kaifeng continued to explain to Lin Chen.

After listening, Lin Chen suddenly realized.

What kind of place was the War Department? It was the core military strength of a sect, a military force different from the sect's disciples.

And the War Department's most disliked figures were profligate scions like Qin Kaifeng.

Firstly, these scions were usually pampered under the protection of their elders, so not only could they not endure hardship, but they often assumed the airs of young masters and princesses, making them very difficult for the War Department to control.

Beyond that, there was another reason, which was that the Formation Sect did not want various powers within the sect interfering with the strength of the War Department.

If family power got entangled with the War Department, then the War Department would inevitably be affected, compromising the Formation Sect's security.

The Chu Family had founded their own strength within the War Department, hence Qin Kaifeng wished to use his relationship with Lin Chen to enter the War Department.

After hearing Qin Kaifeng's explanation, Lin Chen understood the relationship of the War Department within the Formation Sect. He thought that upon his return to the Jade Cauldron Sect, he should be mindful of this reason, otherwise he might truly cause major trouble due to insufficient governance in the future.

For instance, if the War Department became too powerful under a certain faction and consequently disobeyed the sect's authority or even opposed the sect, it would lead to unnecessary internal strife. It reminded Lin Chen to prevent this potential disaster in advance.

At this moment, Lin Chen looked up at a group of people in the distance. Dressed in armor and wielding long spears and sharp weapons, they were unmistakably members of the War Department.

The War Department approached the martial artists who had not passed the barrier and stated their terms.

If they wished to continue participating in the Formation Sect's grand assembly and competition, they would have to join the War Department, which would give them the chance to proceed. Otherwise, they would be eliminated and be required to leave the Formation Sect immediately.

However, joining the War Department meant losing their freedom in the future and serving the Formation Sect's War Department, obedient to its arrangements and orders.

Hearing this restriction, many martial artists chose to stay. After all, their backgrounds and strength could not compare to the Formation Sect, and being inside the sect to access the Formation Sect's cultivation resources and techniques was a far better situation than their current one. Thus, even being bound to the War Department was something they were willing to accept.

Yet, this was only true for some. The majority of martial artists who had not passed the transparent barrier chose to leave.

And to this, the armored warriors of the War Department made no move to stop them, allowing them to depart.

For the War Department, they wanted followers who would obey unconditionally in the future, a military force always ready to comply, not those who were not genuinely interested in joining the War Department.

After passing through the transparent barrier, the second trial they faced was an incredibly large stele.

All were required to channel their Spiritual Power into the stele so that it could further test everyone's Talent.

As the crowd followed the instructions and placed their palms on the stele, numerous lines of glowing characters immediately appeared on it, clearly indicating the testers' Cultivation Realms and Talent information.

"Xuan Shangfei, Cultivation at the Third Layer of the Heaven-reaching Realm, Medium Grade aptitude, scoring seventy points."

"Mo Caiyun, Cultivation at the Heaven-reaching Realm Fifth Layer, Medium Grade aptitude, scoring eighty-two points."

"..."

As numbers floated above the heads of each person, the crowd's expressions showed both joy and sorrow.

According to this stele's test, a perfect score was one hundred, with lower scores indicating poorer talent.

The individuals had long ceased testing their aptitude since reaching their current Cultivation Realms, as a martial artist's aptitude was actually determined at the very start of cultivation, when they had first opened their meridians and reached the Body Tempering Realm.

Although there were treasures that could improve one's physique and thus boost aptitude somewhat, the base was set, and the increase in aptitude was ultimately limited.

"Qi Xiuwu, Cultivation at the Fourth Layer of the Heaven-reaching Realm, lower-grade aptitude, scoring fifty-nine points."

At this moment, as the shabbily dressed man placed his palm on the testing stele, a series of numbers instantly appeared above his head.

Seeing the characters above Qi Xiuwu's head, the crowd could not help but show a tinge of mockery.

After all, Qi Xiuwu's aptitude was too poor, and he had not even reached the passing line.

The people truly wondered how this fellow had managed to pass through the transparent barrier. Shouldn't someone of such poor quality have been unable to pass?

Listening to the various discussions about himself, Qi Xiuwu's expression became somewhat unsightly.

Being average had always been his sore point. If he hadn't encountered Lin Chen within the Formation Sect, his current cultivation wouldn't have been able to defeat the Heaven-reaching Realm Fifth Layer.

As the discussions continued, a man with a cold expression slowly stepped up to the stele, extended his hands, and placed them upon it.

"Du Feiyu, Cultivation at the Ninth Layer of the Heaven-reaching Realm, superior-grade aptitude, scoring ninety-one points."

Chapter 406: Senior Sister, Stop Being Willful

"Incredible, he actually has Superior Aptitude, and his overall score has reached ninety-one points. Who is this guy to possess such talent?"

"You don't know him? Not too long ago, this guy had a big fight with Lin Chen, one of the four great demons, and it ended in a draw."

The crowd surrounding Du Feiyu erupted into continuous discussion as they looked at the words floating above his head. Some were surprised because Du Feiyu was so young. With such natural talent, he was likely to perform well in the upcoming trials. Unless he performed poorly, he was sure to be chosen by the Formation Sect, and thus one could say that Du Feiyu was already a predetermined disciple of the Formation Sect.

Upon this realization, everyone secretly decided in their hearts that they must not provoke this person.

However, while the crowd discussed Du Feiyu in praise and envy, Du Feiyu's expression was not good at all.

His gaze fell on Lin Chen, who was far away. Having crossed hands with Lin Chen, he knew full well how terrifying Lin Chen was, and moreover, Lin Chen's cultivation level was even lower than his.

If compared to Lin Chen, his talent would undoubtedly be considered lower.

Meanwhile, Hong Lan slowly placed her hand on the stele. It wasn't long before the stele lit up with a glow, revealing that Hong Lan had only Medium Grade aptitude and scored just eighty points.

To this, Hong Lan's eyes were lifeless as she muttered indifferently, "So it's as expected."

For this trip, she had indeed held no hope at all.

All of this was because she had encountered Lin Chen, which had dealt a blow to her confidence.

It was no use. Not just for her, even a Heavenly Pride like Du Feiyu was inwardly shaken upon encountering Lin Chen. Lin Chen's power was simply too defying and monstrous. How could ordinary martial artists compare to him?

The issue of talent had always been a sore point for Qi Xiuwu. Now, seeing Du Feiyu's talent surpass his own, he couldn't help but feel disgruntled.

At this moment, Qin Kaifeng also approached the testing stele. He placed his hand upon it, and the words that appeared above his head shocked everyone.

"Qin Kaifeng, cultivation at the Ninth Layer of the Heaven-reaching Realm, top-tier aptitude, score ninety-eight points."

These large characters, which flashed into view, immediately attracted everyone's gaze and were extremely dazzling.

Perhaps it was arranged by people like Tang Yuntian of the Formation Sect to make the array formation in such a way that, after Qin Kaifeng tested his talents, the luminescent text would appear very eye-catching.

"Haha, mere superior aptitude, and you dare to make a fuss? Have you seen the top-tier aptitude of others? That's what a real martial artist looks like. I suggest you all go home, or you'll only be asking for trouble."

Upon glimpsing Qin Kaifeng's talent, the corner of Qi Xiuwu's mouth immediately curled into a smug grin.

Even though Qin Kaifeng's talent far surpassed his own, Qi Xiuwu seemed intent on bickering with people like Du Feiyu, ready to give them a piece of his mind.

"You... If that guy hadn't robbed me of all the treasures I had on me, I would have surely been able to increase my cultivation during this time, and my score wouldn't possibly be so low."

Upon hearing Qi Xiuwu's criticism, Hong Lan immediately stepped forward, hands on her hips as she pointed at Qi Xiuwu and expressed her discontent.

"Oh, it turns out you're upset because Brother Lin took away your treasures. Then you're more than welcome to go find him yourself."

Qi Xiuwu didn't shy away from stirring the pot, sneering coldly at Hong Lan.

He truly wished Hong Lan would lose her temper and go settle the score with Lin Chen because he knew if Hong Lan and her group really troubled Lin Chen, it would be them who'd end up in trouble. After all, with Lin Chen's infamous reputation in the Formation Sect, who would dare to provoke him lightly?

At Qi Xiuwu's words, Hong Lan became instantly furious, her hair nearly standing on end with anger.

"Enough, junior sister, stop making a fuss," the middle-aged man came over to Hong Lan, his face stern as he immediately chided her.

The middle-aged man was genuinely afraid that Hong Lan might provoke Du Feiyu to defend her again and cause trouble with Lin Chen.

Lin Chen's notoriety had already spread within the Formation Sect, so the middle-aged man was well aware that Lin Chen was a difficult person to provoke, and he was honestly scared.

Provoking Lin Chen again would certainly lead to consequences they wouldn't be able to escape from.

Although Du Feiyu's talent was strong, after the last battle between Du Feiyu and Lin Chen, it became clear that Du Feiyu could not possibly be Lin Chen's opponent.

"But senior brother, that guy and Lin Chen clearly tricked us and even robbed us of our treasures."

"We can have junior brother Feiyu fight for us again. Last time, he almost defeated that guy called Lin Chen."

Hong Lan had always believed that Du Feiyu was gaining the upper hand in his last fight with Lin Chen. This left both the middle-aged man and Du Feiyu utterly speechless.

They really didn't know how to explain to Hong Lan that their last fight with Lin Chen resulted in their defeat, and surely they wouldn't dare to say it in front of so many people, would they?

"Junior sister, this is not our own family grounds. We can't afford to act rashly anymore; otherwise, if we cause trouble, none of the four of us will be able to leave the Formation Sect safely," the middle-aged man said with a grave expression, making the situation sound more serious.

Hearing the middle-aged man's words, Hong Lan turned to Du Feiyu, looking for help with pleading eyes, but all she received in return was Du Feiyu shaking his head.

"Senior sister, you should listen to the senior brothers. That guy called Lin Chen isn't someone we can afford to provoke. It was you who initially wanted to take treasures from him. We picked trouble ourselves and fell into someone else's hands, getting robbed of our own treasures, and it was our fault," Du Feiyu said to Hong Lan, for the first time refusing to go along with her plan and instead delivering words that struck at Hong Lan's hopes.

"Even you, junior brother Feiyu..."

At that moment, Hong Lan felt incredibly wronged. She could never have imagined that her junior brother, who always heeded her wishes, would now side with another and oppose her.

But how could Hong Lan know that Du Feiyu acted in such a way precisely because of his previous encounter with Lin Chen? He realized Lin Chen's fearsomeness.

If they really became enemies with Lin Chen, it was doubtful whether they would be able to leave the Formation Sect safely.

After all, Lin Chen, despite being a vile person, seemed to abide by some principles for now. But who could predict if, during the upcoming trials, Lin Chen would combine new resentment with old and act against them unfavorably?

"Senior sister, just listen to the senior brothers and don't be so headstrong,"

Chapter 407: The Future of Zhao Family

Hearing both senior brothers pleading with Hong Lan, the delicate girl also stepped forward at this moment, extending her jade-like hand to pull at Hong Lan and spoke.

Upon hearing their words, Hong Lan furrowed her brows deeply and gazed intently at the frail girl. Never had she imagined that even her little junior sister would, like the two senior brothers, oppose her ideas and speak in favor of Lin Chen.

"You... you all bully me."

As Hong Lan spoke, tears began to stream from her eyes. She hadn't expected that her senior brothers and sister would all side with an outsider.

Meanwhile, as countless martial artists tested their talents on the stone stele, Lin Chen watched as two figures extended their hands and placed them on the stone stele.

"Zhao Zhongtian, cultivation at the seventh level of the Reverting Void Realm, superior aptitude, score eighty-nine."

"Zhao Zhongchuan, cultivation at the peak of the Heaven-reaching Realm, top-tier aptitude, score ninety-five."

Lin Chen narrowed his eyes slightly as he watched the light and shadow characters above the distant figures' heads, his lips curling into a smile, seemingly contemplating some plan.

The test results of Zhao's father and son were all within Lin Chen's expectations, with Zhao Zhongchuan's score far surpassing the more powerful Zhao Zhongtian.

After all, these scores were based on cultivation and talent rather than higher cultivation equating to higher scores. It seemed that the scores were generated by some active formation operation, reflecting the potential of the martial artists being tested.

The higher the score, the greater the potential, and subsequently, the elders of the Formation Sect would pay more attention to martial artists with high scores.

"Brother Lin is very interested in Zhao's people?"

Qin Kaifeng didn't meddle in the affairs of Zhao and Chu families, but that didn't mean he was unaware of their situations.

Seeing Lin Chen's attention on Zhao Zhongtian and Zhao Zhongchuan, Qin Kaifeng asked curiously.

"Heh, just some old grudges," Lin Chen replied, looking back at Qin Kaifeng with a faint smile.

Though Lin Chen held a grudge against the Zhao Family, he didn't really take it to heart, given his characteristic approach of confronting challenges directly. Overthinking was pointless.

However, Lin Chen could affirm that he and the Zhao Family would inevitably reach a definitive conclusion, and the Zhao father and son must die.

It would be best to resolve this matter within the Formation Sect; otherwise, it might bring trouble back to the Jade Cauldron Sect, jeopardizing the safety of Xu Lianyu and others within the sect.

"I see."

"The Zhao Family has some influence in the Formation Sect's Outer Sect; they are not easy to deal with. Be careful when dealing with them," Qin Kaifeng lightly reminded Lin Chen after hearing his words.

At that moment, the Zhao Family patriarch saw the scores of Zhao Zhongtian and Zhao Zhongchuan and couldn't help but reveal a slight smile.

They joined the Formation Sect years ago, and although they only took root in the Outer Sect, establishing their own power within the Outer Sect was quite impressive in the Eastern Domain.

Despite the Zhao Family's influence being limited to the Outer Sect, their power held a significant position within the Inner Sect as well.

Even the elders of the Formation Sect had to show some courtesy to the Zhao Family.

Now, even though Zhao's influence in Divine Sun City was gone, the arrival of Zhao Zhongtian and Zhao Zhongchuan at the Formation Sect, with their talents, meant they were destined to become Inner Sect Disciples.

In time, the Zhao Family would gradually root themselves deeper into the Formation Sect's Inner Sect, and their status within the sect was bound to rise even higher.

However, at this moment, the Chu Family felt their expressions change drastically upon seeing the powerful talents of the Zhao father and son who had just arrived at the Formation Sect, with one at the cultivation of the Reverting Void Realm, and none could feel happy about it.

"There are such strong talents within the Zhao Family, and we never heard of them before."

"It's said that they arrived at the Formation Sect not long ago, having previously been in Divine Sun City, near the gap between the Southern and Northern Regions."

"With these two in the Zhao Family, their strength and status within the Formation Sect will surely rise rapidly, and the balanced situation among the three families in the Outer Sect may be disrupted."

Tang Yuntian, Tang Yunshan, and Tang Yunfei had very unsightly expressions at that moment. Although the three families were equally powerful within the Formation Sect's Outer Sect, they, as Outer Sect Elders, tended to skew some benefits of the sect towards the Tang Family, which was very advantageous for the family's development.

After all, they were Outer Sect Elders in charge of all affairs.

However, the emergence of Zhao Zhongtian and Zhao Zhongchuan from the Zhao Family would probably disrupt this balance before long, even threatening their positions within the Outer Sect.

In the worst case, even replacing the Outer Sect Elders was a possibility.

Thinking of this, not only the Chu Family but also the Tang Family started to feel unrest about the Zhao Family.

Yet, despite their displeasure, they dared not cause trouble at this assembly.

The Formation Sect has very severe penalties for harming sect prodigies in secret. Although Zhao Zhongtian and Zhao Zhongchuan couldn't yet be considered true disciples of the Formation Sect, they were already participating in the competition. Should any mishaps occur, the Formation Sect would undoubtedly investigate thoroughly.

This was also why the Zhao Family did not dare to act rashly against Lin Chen after he arrived at the Formation Sect.

At this moment, as the results of everyone's tests on the stele were revealed, the three elders of the Tang Family followed the rules of the Outer Sect by asking those who scored below fifty to leave, perhaps choosing to join the War Department and continue with further competitions and testing.

This second round of testing eliminated nearly thirty percent of the martial artists, leaving just over a hundred thousand remaining.

The eliminated participants were allowed to stay within the Formation Sect's area, leaving gradually over the remaining month, as the Formation Sect wouldn't expel them.

However, if they didn't leave after a month, the Formation Sect would then proceed with expulsion.

And for a long time, no one has dared to stay for a month without leaving, as the Formation Sect's method of expulsion is far from gentle.

At that moment, a woman in a fiery red dress with bare feet slowly approached the stele under the watchful eyes of many, raising her hand to conduct her test.

"It's that princess from Yanwu Country. I wonder what her score will be."

Many were secretly looking forward to it, after all, this Little Princess from Yanwu Country possessed quite a nefarious reputation.

Lin Chen was also very interested, sensing that the physique of Yanwu Country's princess was rather extraordinary.

Chapter 408: One Sword Pavilion, Mu Qianqiu

At this moment, all eyes were on the little princess from Yanwu Country.

The reason everyone was so focused on the performance of the little princess from Yanwu Country was not only because she had high aptitude but also because her cultivation was profound, with half a foot already stepping into the Reverting Void Realm.

Facing the gazes of the crowd, the girl simply ignored them and slowly stretched out her hand, pressing it against the huge stone stele.

Hum—

In an instant, the moment the palm of the little princess from Yanwu Country touched the stone stele and infused spiritual power, a massive pale blue light barrier shot up into the sky, at least thirty feet high.

Upon seeing this extraordinary phenomenon, people all around immediately turned their eyes to the little princess of Yanwu Country, their faces filled with shock.

There weren't many people left to test, and no one before had produced such an extraordinary sign.

Surrounding them were many Formation Sect disciples who had come to watch the excitement, and they too were wearing expressions of astonishment.

"It has been many years since I've seen such heaven and earth phenomenon appear. Who is this woman that she can cause such a vision? It seems her aptitude is truly extraordinary."

"Yes, looking at her performance, she must be someone those elders in the sect would fight over."

"A spot as an Inner Sect Disciple or even a True Disciple is surely hers."

The onlookers were all discussing animatedly, looking at the little princess of Yanwu Country with great envy.

"Xia Wanxin, cultivation Half-Step Return to Void Realm, Supreme Grade aptitude, score one hundred points."

Above the giant stone stele, as the golden light flickered, huge characters suddenly appeared.

Seeing the appearance of these characters, the scene instantly became lively again.

"My goodness, to actually score one hundred points, her talent is just too heaven-defying."

"I've been in the Formation Sect for nearly thirty years now, and I've only seen a few people get full marks. These individuals have now all become the strongest in the Eastern Domain, you all know brother Yu Yan, right? He also scored a full one hundred points that year."

"What are you saying? Those who scored full marks all became strong like brother Yu Yan later on? If that's true, then doesn't it mean that the woman before us could also become a Heavenly Human Realm powerhouse in the future?"

"Indeed, this woman has already taken half a step into the Reverting Void Realm. I'm afraid it won't take long for her to truly break through to the Reverting Void Realm once she joins the Formation Sect."

The sounds of discussion were incessant among the surrounding crowd.

Lin Chen watched the little princess of Yanwu Country and sighed to himself.

Woosh woosh—

While everyone was marvelling at the talent of the little princess of Yanwu Country, figures dressed in white robes suddenly flew rapidly from the direction of the Formation Sect's Inner Sect.

"Little girl, would you be willing to join me as my disciple? I am Elder Mu of the Pill Pavilion in the Inner Sect. If you become my disciple, you'll never have to worry about elixirs for your cultivation again,"

said an old man with a long beard and unruly hair, his face flushed red as he looked at Xia Wanxin and spoke.

The old man's gaze on Xia Wanxin was very fervent, extremely satisfied with her aptitude.

"Old Man Bai, you've been refining elixirs all your life and haven't produced any miraculous elixirs, better not to waste the girl's time,"

"Little girl, come with me to learn Artifact Refining instead. Once you've mastered it, you'll never have to ask anyone for weapons again. You can refine your own and ensure that the magic artifacts you possess are the most advanced and handy,"

a white-haired old man who had a long braid sticking straight up said as he looked at Xia Wanxin.

Looking at the continuous disagreement between the two, Xia Wanxin was completely disinterested.

As the little princess of Yanwu Country, things like Alchemy and Artifact Refining held no attraction for her, and she simply ignored them.

Xia Wanxin didn't speak but instead turned her gaze to the third figure who had arrived.

"Little girl, these two old guys flatter themselves as being so great, but in the end, they are nothing more than a fire tender and a blacksmith,"

"If you were to become a disciple to them, it would be purely a waste of your youth. For a Martial Artist, the most important thing is to improve your own cultivation strength. Would you like to follow me and learn the sword? If you become my disciple, I'll pass on all my unique skills to you without reservation,"

the woman that Xia Wanxin was looking at said. She appeared to be in her thirties, dressed in a purple robe that clung tightly to her body and fluttered in the wind, exuding a sense of charm that attracted the hot eyes of numerous male disciples.

However, this seemingly charming woman, unknown to others but well-known to the members of the Formation Sect, Elder Mu was already over three hundred years old.

At the moment, the young-looking woman spoke those words to Xia Wanxin, and suddenly, Sword Qi swirled around her, shooting up to the heavens. Her powerful aura immediately made it difficult for the surrounding disciples to breathe, and they didn't dare to look directly at Mu Qianqiu.

And in the distance, Lin Chen watched Mu Qianqiu with squinted eyes.

"Old lady, who are you deriding? What's wrong with being a fire tender? Your One Sword Pavilion still comes to our Pill Pavilion for elixirs, don't you? If you can, from now on, your One Sword Pavilion should refine your own elixirs and stop taking a single pill from our pavilion,"

the old man with the tall braid said, clearly unhappy.

"You look down on fire-tenders, fine, but why the disrespect towards us blacksmiths? Don't forget, the very sword you use comes from our Spiritual Treasure Pavilion,"

he continued, his displeasure evident.

The two of them appeared quite dissatisfied with Mu Qianqiu, within the entire Formation Sect who would dare significantly offend these two elders, after all, a Martial Artist seeking to enhance their own strength couldn't possibly do without elixirs and magic artifacts.

Offending Pill Pavilion and Spiritual Treasure Pavilion meant no access to high-grade elixirs or quality spiritual treasures in the future.

However, the beautiful woman simply ignored the discontent of the two old men, clutching the sharp sword in her hand. With a wave through the air, an immensely powerful Sword Intent burst forth from her, prompting countless disciples around to retreat.

"What's wrong? Are my words incorrect? Apart from tending to fires and forging metal, what else can you two do?"

"Can you wield a sword? If you can, feel free to come and exchange a few moves with me,"

she said challengingly.

Chapter 409: There Are So Many Heavenly Prides in This Generation

"Such a domineering Sword Intent, this mastery of swordsmanship is indeed not inferior to mine, it seems my own path in swordsmanship still has a long way to go,"

Lin Chen muttered to himself as he observed the powerful Sword Intent emanating from the beautiful woman in the distance.

When Lin Chen's Second Soul Division had completely mastered the High Mountain Flowing Water Swordsmanship, Lin Chen thought he had already achieved a high level of expertise in the art of the sword.

But who could have imagined, the moment Mu Qianqiu made her appearance, she immediately forced Lin Chen to face reality, realizing that his swordsmanship had nothing to be proud of and was far from matching hers.

Hearing the beautiful woman's words, the two white-haired elders turned red with anger, but they stood rooted to the spot, unable to retort.

There was no helping it; in Alchemy and Artifact Refining, the two elders were the best in the Formation Sect. However, when it came to Martial Force, even if they combined forces, they stood no chance against Mu Qianqiu.

If they were to fight, they would likely bring trouble upon themselves. To have the uninitiated disciples witness the scene of them being taught a lesson by Mu Qianqiu during today's martial meeting would result in losing all their dignity.

Tang Yuntian, Tang Yunshan, and Tang Yunfei, at the moment, did not dare to even breathe heavily as they watched the three figures suddenly flying out of the Inner Sect.

As leaders of the Outer Sect, although they had some clout within the Inner Sect, it was only when facing some less significant Inner Sect Elders. The three figures before them were the three giants of the Inner Sect, especially Mu Qianqiu whose strength was unfathomable, ranking among the top three powerhouses of the Formation Sect. They didn't dare to breathe loudly at this moment, suspending the commands for the martial meeting, waiting for Mu Qianqiu to settle the matter at hand first.

It was clear that Xia Wanxin, the Little Princess of Yanwu Country, had already been internally decided upon by the Inner Sect.

Because of the dispute among the three, Mu Qianqiu eventually did not force Xia Wanxin to become her disciple, instead letting Xia Wanxin choose for herself.

The other Martial Artists around them were already red-eyed with envy at this point.

The three figures before them were the three giants of the Formation Sect's Inner Sect. To become a disciple under any of their tutelage was something other Martial Artists would strive for but could hardly obtain.

Yet now, these three giants were letting Xia Wanxin make the choice instead.

This showed how extraordinary Xia Wanxin's aptitude must be.

Apart from Xia Wanxin, Qin Kaifeng's aptitude was only slightly inferior to hers, but he did not receive such treatment.

The crowd was unaware that Qin Kaifeng did not receive such treatment because of his special status.

"Thank you, three seniors, for your high regard. I have never left Yanwu Country since childhood, and all my cultivation has been under the supervision of my elders, so I truly am uncertain about which direction I should develop in,"

"So I would like to go through the assessments first, join the Formation Sect, and then explore which area I am best suited for," Xia Wanxin responded to the three with utmost sincerity and politeness.

Her words had no problem at all because they came from the heart. Indeed, Xia Wanxin had grown up under the care of her elders, so she was truly unsure whether she preferred Alchemy or Artifact Refining, Array Formation, or learning Swordsmanship, or something else.

Hearing Xia Wanxin's sincere words, the two elders from Pill Pavilion and Spiritual Treasure Pavilion secretly breathed a sigh of relief. They feared that their cowardice in front of Mu Qianqiu made Xia Wanxin look down on them and join One Sword Pavilion. But now, it seemed Xia Wanxin might not like practicing swordsmanship, and they still had a chance to recruit this talented individual into their own sects.

"Truly befitting of Yanwu Country's Little Princess, to actually reject the invitations of the three giants, this is truly defying the heavens,"

"Yes, such a great opportunity; grasping it would mean soaring to the heavens. This girl is really capricious, not realizing the great opportunity she is losing. When we became Martial Artists, where did we have the luxury of being so picky? Any of these three choices would lead to a bright future if one could become a disciple under any of the three giants. There's no need to dilly-dally,"

"Do you think everyone is like us? Can't you see that Yanwu Country's Little Princess has never needed to worry about Cultivation Resources since childhood? Her problem is fundamentally different from ours. If she doesn't pursue the aspiration that speaks to her soul, she will inevitably face inner demons that will affect her future cultivation. Moreover, she has only rejected the invitations of the three giants for now, it's not like she won't have the opportunity to join them after entering the Formation Sect,"

The Martial Artists around could not help but sigh at Xia Wanxin's decision.

Some thought Xia Wanxin was being overly fastidious, turning her nose up at an opportunity when others would go to great lengths for it. Yet those with a deeper understanding pointed out the truth that if Xia Wanxin did not pursue her true self, she was bound to face inner demons.

Lin Chen turned his head to look at the person who had spoken those words and saw an elder whose Cultivation was at the First Level of Reverting Void Realm, probably someone of the same caliber as Zhao Zhongtian. However, this elder's aptitude was not as high as that of Zhao Zhongtian's, but regarding the pursuit of life and understanding, he saw things very clearly.

After hearing the elder's words, Lin Chen also reflected on himself. What was he truly pursuing?

Was it personal strength, or to protect people like Yang Yuemin?

At that moment, as the three giants arrived at the martial competition platform from the Inner Sect, more Inner Sect Elders started emerging one after another.

Clearly, they too were drawn by the exceptional talents exhibited by Xia Wanxin, fearing that they would be too late and another would claim her already.

But after arriving at the scene and learning of the situation, they were left feeling helpless. Even Mu Qianqiu couldn't persuade Xia Wanxin to join her, so naturally, it was difficult for them as well.

The multitude of elders had to give up on the idea of recruiting Xia Wanxin. However, since they had already come from the Inner Sect, they were in no rush to return, instead choosing to stay and see if any other exceptionally talented Heavenly Prides would appear.

Hum—

Just as the commotion caused by Xia Wanxin had settled down, a radiant green light shot up into the sky.

A new phenomenon had appeared, signifying yet another prodigy with exceptional talent.

All eyes followed the light, and they saw a plainly dressed young man.

"Ouyang Xuan, with Cultivation at Half-Step Return to Void Realm, top-tier aptitude, and a score of one hundred points."

To everyone's surprise, this year's recruitment assembly saw the rise of two Heavenly Prides with top-tier aptitude and perfect scores.

The scene suddenly stirred up again.

Chapter 410: A Man of Infamy Is Just Like This

""My God, another one with a perfect score; are all the Heavenly Prides of this generation so incredibly talented?"

"It's indeed incredible. It's been years since a Heavenly Pride with a perfect score appeared, and now we have two in this generation. Surely, there won't be a third one."

"A third one? What are you joking about? Do you really think Heavenly Prides are as common as cabbages?"

The martial artists around were all staring at the martial artist named Ouyang Xuan with astonishment, envious of such natural talent.

Just like before, the Inner Sect Elders immediately flew to Ouyang Xuan's side, offering to take him as a disciple.

However, just like Xia Wanxin before him, Ouyang Xuan rejected all the Elders' invitations and didn't join any of their tutelages.

This led the surrounding martial artists to wonder if there was something wrong with Ouyang Xuan's head. After all, Xia Wanxin came from a powerful background and never lacked Cultivation Resources since childhood, but ordinary martial artists like them couldn't compare to a lady of her stature.

In the eyes of the crowd, Ouyang Xuan's actions were foolish. He thought too highly of himself just because of his decent Talent and dared to refuse the invitations of Inner Sect Elders.

What the crowd didn't know was that Ouyang Xuan's ambition wasn't to be taken under the wings of these Inner Sect Elders, not even considering the Peak Masters of the Inner Sect as his intended masters.

His goal was to become a disciple of those reclusive ancestors of the Formation Sect, for only by studying under them could one become a supreme martial artist, transcending the Heavenly Human Realm.

Otherwise, even if he became the disciple of the current Heavenly Human Realm Elders, he might enjoy a moment of glory, but with his Talent, he could possibly surpass these mentors in less than ten years.

Ouyang Xuan actually had a notorious reputation among the four courtyards, but nobody had expected his Talent to be so powerful, actually achieving a perfect score.

By this point, three of the four notorious figures in this generation's four courtyards who couldn't be provoked had appeared, and each one had a perfect score. The surrounding martial artists couldn't help but think, all four of these untouchables might end up with perfect scores.

With that thought, their gazes simultaneously turned towards Lin Chen.

The Inner Sect Elders' dignity had taken a hit after being turned down twice when offering apprenticeship.

In the past, those who they sought out in the Outer Sect competition would fawn over them, begging to be taken as disciples.

But now, it seemed the tables had turned. They were the ones losing face, asking disciples to join their tutelage, only to have their invitations declined.

Being Inner Sect Elders, they had their own dignity and pride; hence, they stopped offering apprenticeships and simply watched the competition unfold.

They were also curious to see how many prodigious Heavenly Prides were among the competitors this time.

Indeed, it wasn't surprising that Xia Wanxin and others rejected their offers. In the past years, the highest score anyone achieved in the second round of assessments was ninety, and those were considered excellent Heavenly Prides.

Even then, some disciples would choose their masters when being scouted.

But, there has never been an outright rejection like Xia Wanxin's before.

However, if one thought about it, the level of Talent possessed by people like Xia Wanxin was perfect scoring. Although only ten points higher than ninety, that gap represented an insurmountable chasm between heaven and earth.

Given a Heavenly Pride like Xia Wanxin, with a little guidance, it wouldn't take many years before she surpassed the Inner Sect Elders in Cultivation. The Elders were well aware of this, but it still sat uneasily with them being rejected by a junior.

Mu Qianqiu, however, was a different story. She was a benchmark of combat power within the Formation Sect, nothing like the present Inner Sect Elders.

But Ouyang Xuan still had expectations; he had always wanted to join the ranks of those secluded Elders of the Formation Sect. If that failed, then turning to Mu Qianqiu wouldn't be a bad fallback.

After all, as strong as Mu Qianqiu was, she was still not on the same level as the reclusive ancestors of the Formation Sect.

At that moment, with everyone's gaze fixed on Lin Chen, he stepped up to the stele without hesitation and placed his palm on it.

Hum—

A bright light appeared, and a string of characters emerged over Lin Chen's head, recording his Talent and score.

However, when the crowd looked above Lin Chen's head, they were shocked to find his Talent was not as strong as they imagined.

"Lin Chen, Cultivation at Ninth Layer of the Melding Earth Realm, Talent superior, score ninety points."

The conspicuous characters that appeared above Lin Chen's head soon vanished.

Seeing Lin Chen's Talent was not on par with Xia Wanxin, Qin Kaifeng, and Ouyang Xuan, the crowd felt a collective sigh of relief, feeling much more balanced.

In the span of several days, Lin Chen had broken through from the Eighth Layer to the Ninth Layer of the Melding Earth Realm.

The truth was, with Lin Chen's physique and the Cultivation Technique he practiced, if the stele had truly detected his real Talent, the light would have soared more than a hundred zhang, surpassing the stele's limit, and he would have been beyond comparison to Xia Wanxin and the others.

But Lin Chen didn't want to expose too much of his Talent. Having come to the Formation Sect alone without the strong background of Xia Wanxin and Qin Kaifeng, and with the Zhao Family in the sect as his enemy, getting too much attention due to his Talent might lead to an untimely demise without even knowing it.

Without absolute strength, Lin Chen had to conceal his Talent. However, that didn't mean he needed to be low-key or timid.

The surrounding people all discussed among themselves, consoling themselves with remarks like how one of the four infamous names wasn't so exceptional after all.

But little did they know, Lin Chen had only spent three short years reaching the current Ninth Layer of the Melding Earth Realm.

Three years ago, Lin Chen's Cultivation was crippled by Mu Qingxue and Li Chu, essentially starting from scratch.

What others took over a decade to cultivate, Lin Chen achieved in just three years.

Moreover, his combat power far exceeded the Melding Earth Realm; if he revealed all his trump cards, Lin Chen could even fight a Reverting Void Realm martial artist."